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R. A. Christian

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Chronic Inflammation of the Stomach.

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Chronic Inflammation of the Stomach

The numerous and important connections of the stomach, its situation and functions, render it extremely liable to morbid derangement. Accordingly we have a very extensive Catalogue of diseases, having their seat, in that important organ. In fact, even diseases that were formerly considered entirely unconnected with it, have, by more recent observations, been incontestably proven, to have their seats entirely there, producing their effects, on other systems of the body, entirely through the medium of sympathetic action.

To this enormous Catalogue of gastric diseases there is another, to be added, which, though frequently met with has never, I believe, been described by any writer, and the credit of having first brought it into notice, is due to Dr. Chapman. From the hints thrown out, by the professor, in his lectures on this subject, my attention was first directed to the disease, and although the short period, that has since elapsed, has necessarily prevented my observing many

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cases of it, yet the few that I have seen, have been sufficient to convince me, that its occurrence is by no means infrequent.

The disease in question is a slow or chronic Inflammation of the stomach. It occurs most frequently in miasmatic situations, being, I believe, frequently the sequel of Bilious, Remitting, and Intermitting Fevers. It attacks generally persons of delicate habits, and very often those, who from their peculiar conformation, seem particularly predisposed to Pulmonary Consumption. I have seen one family, in which there seemed to be a predisposition to the disease, most of the members being affected with it soon after they arrived at the age of puberty.

Symptoms. The symptoms of this, like other Gastric affections, are numerous, and very much diversified. So extensive indeed is the chain of sympathies arising from the stomach, so intimately is it connected with every part of our structure, however remote, that in the diseases of that organ most of them become affected, and present to us some symptoms of derangement.

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The disease is generally attended with a constant obtuse pain, and sensation of heat in the region of the stomach, great restlessness, and a slow fever, which is attended with a hot, dry and constricted skin, a dry and hacking cough, hurried respiration, a white and dry tongue, and a pulse frequent chorded and small. As the disease advances, these symptoms are aggravated, and numerous sympathetic pains are felt in different parts of the body. - The head is much affected throughout its whole course; the patient is perpetually tormented with a dull headache, shooting pains over the eyes, and the eyes themselves are not unfrequently affected, with the same kind of pain. These symptoms are always increased when substances are taken into the stomach, particularly if they be hard of digestion, or the stomach be distended by them. We also have, numerous pains about the neck, shoulders, and thorax shifting very frequently their situation. Sometimes they are seated in the right side, but much more frequently, in the left, extending to the shoulder.

In addition to these symptoms, the patient is particularly sensible to the least variation in the state of the atmosphere, and

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and these vicissitudes, very generally, produce an exacerbation of the disease. – The appetite is not always impaired, in fact it is most frequently, morbidly increased. The countenance assumes much the same appearance as in Pulmonary Consumption. The cheeks are suffused with the hectic blush, the features are sharp, and the exhaustion of the system, in many cases, equally great.

The lips are generally covered with a peculiar scaly eruption and occasionally an eruption appears about the mouth and fauces, accompanied by a soreness, extending along the course of the alimentary canal, producing the symptoms of that disease called chronic Thrush, which, in my opinion, is very often connected with the condition of the stomach under consideration, or in other words, an aggravated form of this disease. This opinion I am led to adopt, not only from the appearances of inflammation, revealed by dissection in such cases, but also having observed those symptoms occur several times during the existence of this disease, from some cause tending to increase the irritation, and inflammation of the stomach.

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When the last mentioned symptoms occur, the disease is also attended with diarrhœa, but in ordinary cases, the bowels are obstinately constipated. —

Between this, and several other Chronic affections, - as may be readily discovered, - there are many very strong points of resemblance, and consequently particular care is necessary in forming a diagnosis. The diseases with which it is most liable to be confounded, are Dyspepsia, Chronic Hepatitis, and Pulmonary Consumption, I shall therefore mention the most characteristic differences, between it, and each of them

1st. It may generally be distinguished from Dyspepsia, by the constancy of the pain, and burning sensation in the region of the stomach, the acidity of the pulse, the hectic flush of the cheeks, and hot skin of the former, whilst in the latter the patient is frequently free from pain, the pulse is weak, and the skin pale and cold. The acidity and flatulence of the stomach, so very distressing in dyspepsia, are in the case before us, seldom troublesome. To these I may add the effects of cold smoking. In dyspepsia tonics and stimulants

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being, the most effectual, whilst in this disease, they are productive of much harm, an entirely opposite plan of treatment, being demanded.

2nd. From Chronic Hepatitis it may be distinguished by the seat of the pain, the sensation of heat in the stomach, these being aggravated when any thing is taken into that organ, and the various sympathetic pains being, for the most part, seated in the left side. The affection of the head is much more considerable in this disease, than in Chronic Hepatitis. The countenance never assumes that bloated, and sallow appearance, which usually mark the diseases of the liver, but on the contrary, that sharpness of features, and hectic aspersion before mentioned.

3rd. To distinguish it from pulmonary Consumption much less discrimination is demanded, there in either of the above cases. With the confirmed stage of Phthisis, it can never be confounded, as in this case, the absence of expectoration will always determine their difference. In the incipient stage of that disease, the difficulty of breathing, with the absence of the various sensations leading to the stomach, and numerous sympathetic affections, will be sufficient to distinguish them.

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Causes. The causes producing this condition of the stomach, are generally, long continued impressions made on that organ by frequent surfeits, and the immoderate use of fermented and spirituous liquors. It is also, as I before mentioned, frequently the result of acute diseases having their seat in the stomach, badly cured. In many cases, however, it is extremely difficult to assign any cause, except a peculiar predisposition somehow produced.

Treatment. The cure of this disease, although tedious, is generally certain, when the proper steps are pursued. From the great exhaustion of the system and its having been sometimes mistaken for dyspepsia, a very opposite and hurtful plan of treatment, has, in many cases, been adopted. Tonics and stimulants have been employed to their full extent. Nothing indeed can be more hurtful than such a practice, so far from relieving the debility, for which they were prescribed, by adding to the irritation of the stomach, increase the inflammation, and conse-

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A plan of treatment exactly the reverse, will be found, most effectual. Venesection is the remedy on which we are chiefly to rely, but to be effectual much discrimination is requisite in its employment. The system will not bear large bleedings, although a considerable quantity is required to be detracted, before the disease can be subdued. The practitioner is to be particularly attentive to the effects produced on the system, and by these effects alone, is he to be regulated in the employment of the lancet.

In some cases the system is so completely exhausted that a very small quantity of blood, - only a few ounces, - can be drawn at once, nevertheless, let us be satisfied with having taken away this small quantity, taking care to repeat the operation as soon as we discover a sufficient reaction of the system.

In the ordinary cases of the disease, venesection repeated every week or fortnight, taking away 8 or 10 ℥ at first, and gradually diminishing the quantity at each

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At the same time we employ venesection, in the manner here recommended, I am by no means disposed, however great my confidence in the remedy, may be, to trust to it alone. It cannot be carried to that extent, which is necessary, to subdue the irritation of the stomach entirely, and besides, we have particular symptoms to combat, which, if not met by their appropriate remedies, would greatly aggravate the disease, and destroy the beneficial effects, produced by venesection. Along with this remedy therefore we should make use of others, and one of the most important of these is Purgatives — In all the cases of the disease, which I have seen, - except when the symptoms of Chronic Phrenitis came on, - one of the most prominent symptoms, was an obstinate constipation of the bowels. This is so much the case at times, as to require very active medicines and these too, in very large doses, to produce evacuations. This constipation, must be obviated, by the employment of cathartics, otherwise the contents of the alimen-

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-tary canal, thus accumulated, and not being acted on by the diseased stomach, would add greatly to the irritation, and consequent inflammation, of that organ. These accumulations are, I believe, very frequently the cause of that aggravated form of the disease, which I have before mentioned, called Chronic Throat. Of this I have seen a very striking example; a man who had for several years, been afflicted, with this disease, informed me that he was in the habit of using, for the costiveness, which in his case was a very troublesome symptom, Glaubers salts, repeated every three or four days. When from any cause this gentleman failed to resort, to his medicine, as usual, he almost always had his symptoms greatly aggravated; eruptions appeared about his mouth and fauces, and he felt a soreness extending along the course of the alimentary canal, which, if he did not quickly evacuate his bowels, by resorting to his remedy, would terminate in a distressing diarrhoea

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are the most proper. They should be employed so as to produce, one, or two, evacuations, daily. When these are insufficient to overcome the costive habit, more powerful articles, should be employed.

Emetics.— These when properly employed are of great utility. They evacuate the irritating contents of the stomach, which, if retained, would produce very injurious effects. When the symptoms of chronic Thrush occur they should never be neglected. Here, as we before observed, the collection of irritating matter in the stomach is the cause of the disease, and when thus produced, the same cause will certainly tend to keep up the morbid condition it has brought on. Nor are the beneficial effects of Emetics to be ascribed solely to the evacuation they produce, on the contrary, I am persuaded, more benefit, is derived, from the peculiar impression produced, by them, on the stomach, which, is more or less inconsistent, with its diseased action.

The vomiting in this case should be gentle, for when a very active article is employed, or

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the emetic very often repeated, I am induced to believe, that they prove injurious, by adding more to the irritation and inflammation of the stomach, by their own stimulating action, than they subtract from it in consequence of their evacuation, and moreover, the benefit arising from the peculiar impression, above attributed to them, is counteracted, or lost, by this irritation. Emetics are productive of benefit, not only when used with the intention of vomiting, but in nauseating doses they are also very important remedies. Administered in this way, they equalize excitement, whilst they relaxe that constricted state of the surface, which always forms a very prominent feature, in the disease. By Dr Chapman Ipecac, in doses so small as not to produce nausea, is recommended, the medicine acting here entirely as an alterative to the stomach, imperceptably breaking down its diseased actions, and associations, and giving it an

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The next remedy to be mentioned is the vesicating applications. Of the efficacy of these, in biliary diseases, every one is sufficiently acquainted, and therefore they should never be overlooked in the case before us. They relieve the remaining irritation of the stomach, which it is impossible by any bleedletting, to a sufficient extent, to accomplish. They should be large, and applied over the epigastric region. In order, however, to be effectual, their discharge, should be kept up, a considerable time, by some stimulating application, or another should be applied as soon as the discharge ceases. ~~in order to keep up~~

Should these remedies prove unsuccessful we must, as a last resource, resort to the use of mercury, carried to the extent, of producing a slight salivation.

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Even, if by the plan of treatment we have recommended, we succeed in removing the disease, it is, I think, of great importance to resort to a slight course of mercury, in order to destroy the predisposition of the system, to the disease, which frequently remaining, once is by the slightest causes excited into action.

As cooperating with these remedies, a very careful attention to the diet, and dress of the patient, should be observed. The diet should be of the lightest kind, every thing of a stimulating nature or hard of digestion, should be avoided. Milk with some one of the farinaceous articles will constitute the most proper diet. The drink should be pure water. Fermented and spirituous liquors should be carefully avoided. There is perhaps, one exception ~~and exception~~ to this practice, that is, when the patient has been in the habit of using those liquors,

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very freely. In this case, as in all others, if the patient is not allowed his usual stimulus, or some substitute, very dangerous consequences may result.

The Dress should be adapted particularly to the changes of weather. Flannel should be worn next the skin both winter and summer; by it the cutaneous vessels are stimulated, producing a constant determination to the surface, which cannot fail to be of the utmost importance.

In addition to these exercise accommodated to the strength of the system should never be neglected.

Here then gentlemen I finish this ~~my~~ imperfect sketch of the very important disease before us, of its many defects, I am fully conscious, and therefore, present it to your consideration, with the utmost diffidence and anxiety. My anxiety would be even ~~to~~ greater than it now

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its, were I not convinced of the candour, and liberality, of that body, to whom it is submitted, and from whom, I am confident, every reasonable indulgence, will be obtained.

All that now remains, is for me to present to you, my sincere thanks, for the benefit I have derived from your several lectures. May your very successful exertions, continue to reflect that honour on our country, which they have hitherto done, May the school which you now support, continue to shed its fertile rays, not only to our own country but to the remotest parts of the earth. May your lives be long, illustrious, and happy, whilst your Talents, Zeal, & Industry are objects of Emulation, all over the world.